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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 645th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 31 January 1991, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE BUREAU OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

2. The CHAIRMAN said that in 1990 the Special Committee had elected a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Special Committee agreed to maintain that composition.

3. It was so decided.

4. Mr. BENDJAMA (Algeria) proposed that Mr. Gambari (Nigeria) be re-elected Chairman of the Committee, that Mr. Rana (Nepal), Mr. Oudovenko (Ukrainian SSR) and Ms. Thorpe (Trinidad and Tobago) be re-elected Vice-Chairmen and that Mr. Gupta (India) be re-elected Rapporteur.

5. Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia) and Mr. DENEGRI (Peru) supported the nominations.

6. Mr. Gambari (Nigeria) was re-elected Chairman, Mr. Rana (Nepal), Mr. Oudovenko (Ukrainian SSR) and Ms. Thorpe (Trinidad and Tobago) were re-elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Gupta (India) was re-elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee had established a Sub-Committee on Implementation of United Nations Resolutions, and a Sub-Committee on Developments in South Africa. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to maintain those two Sub-Committees.

8. It was so decided.

9. The CHAIRMAN proposed that Mr. Awoonor (Ghana) be elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Implementation of United Nations Resolutions, and that Mr. Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe) be elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Developments in South Africa.

10. It was so decided.

11. Mr. SIMELANE (Observer for the African National Congress) said that the people of South Africa and those peoples of southern Africa who had been the perpetual victims of the Pretoria régime acknowledged the invaluable contribution which the Special Committee was making to the total liberation of South Africa. Two days earlier, on 29 January, an important meeting of the African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela, and Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, President of the Inkatha Freedom Party, had been held in an effort to resolve the problems besetting the liberation struggle in South Africa. On the same date, a meeting of ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) had been held.

(Mr. Simelane)

Those developments were taking place at a time when the Special Committee was endeavouring to improve its contribution to the South African liberation movement.

12. Mr. PIETERSEN (Observer for the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania), said that, if President de Klerk had the courage, he could remove the five pillars of apartheid, allow exiles to return to South Africa and release all political prisoners. The Special Committee had the inescapable responsibility of informing States Members of the United Nations and other countries that, at the current stage, any relaxation of pressures and sanctions would result in increased violence in South Africa. Particularly disturbing had been the European Community's recent decision not to prohibit investments in South Africa. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania welcomed the meeting which had taken place on 29 January 1991 between Nelson Mandela and Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, who had ordered their supporters to stop fighting. At their recent meeting, PAC and ANC had decided to declare 1 February 1991 Constituent Assembly Day, and in their joint statement they called upon the masses to observe the day by staying away from work.

13. The CHAIRMAN, expressing appreciation for his own re-election and that of the other members of the Bureau, said that it would be the responsibility of the Committee to give further impetus to the international community's sustained efforts against apartheid. With the assistance of the Centre against Apartheid, the Committee would have to anticipate, and react responsibly to, the challenging developments occuring in South Africa, at all times making its position one that would hasten the adoption of a democratic, non-racial constitution in that country.

14. The complexity of the change would give rise to a dynamic debate on the future of the country and on the form democracy should take; and debate could lead to violent acts. It was important to recognize that South Africa was still essentially a violent society, engendered by the apartheid system. For its part, the black majority had taken steps to stem the violence, with the welcome agreement just reached between ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party to work together in facing the challenges ahead. The régime, either by negligence or by design, had instead failed to take impartial steps to bring the violence under control or punish the perpetrators; just as it had delayed its implementation of agreements reached with ANC.

15. The Committee's central task in the coming year would be to promote the peaceful process of negotiations. Foremost among its concerns would be assistance to the disadvantaged sectors of South African society and to the victims of apartheid, as a way of working to eliminate the social and economic inequalities that impeded the negotiations.

16. Its other main task would be to monitor and influence the international response to the changes taking place. In the coming months, pressure from some quarters for the relaxation of sanctions could be expected to mount, as evidenced by recent economic and diplomatic moves by the European Community, the United States, some Eastern European States and even some African States. It was the Committee's position that sanctions should be maintained.

(The Chairman)

17. The repeal by the de Klerk Government of the Group Areas Act and the Land Acts seemed to be imminent, as also the early release of all political prisoners and the free return of political exiles. The Committee earnestly hoped that the process of repealing those laws would become a mechanism for consultations on decision-making with all the communities affected by the laws, and for redress of the social and economic inequities they had created. Following such positive developments, the anti-apartheid political groupings in South Africa would probably seek to come together in a general conference, at which point they could advise the international community whether the time was ripe to consider the relaxation of some measures. The June 1991 report of the Secretary-General on the progress being made in the implementation of the Declaration on Apartheid and Its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, and the conclusions reached by the Special Committee, after appropriate consultations, should help the international community to determine its policy on sanctions and should help to avoid premature initiatives or inconsistencies among United Nations bodies. In the mean time, until a new constitution establishing a non-racial democracy was adopted in South Africa, pressure of some kind would have to be maintained by international consensus.

18. He reviewed the activities, seminars and consultations scheduled as part of the Committee's programme of work for 1991, which at the same time left enough flexibility for it to respond to changing circumstances. It had been decided that an interim annual report assessing the situation in South Africa would be issued in April. A visit to South Africa was also planned, as a way of encouraging the process of negotiations.

19. Those negotiations would not be held between equals. They would be held between the representatives of a universally condemned system and the representatives of those who were struggling for noble objectives. The Committee should ensure that the international community never lost sight of the moral and political distinction between the two sides, and should work to keep the imbalance of power from impeding the creation of a just society in South Africa.

The meeting rose at noon.